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ABSTRACT

This paper presents brief summaries of four followup studies of the teacher education program at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. Studies examined: (1) relationships between success in an education program and success in the teaching profession: (2) reasons for recent graduates' state of employment and choice of major: (3) comparisons between education majors and other majors: and (4) attitudes and effectiveness of first year teachers. (CJ)

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FOLLOW-UP STUDIES ON THE SUCCESS OF EDUCATION GRADUATES

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FOLLOW-UP STUDIES ON THE SUCCESS OF EDUCATION GRADUATES

In recent years, and largely as a result of pressure from outside agencies, many teacher education institutions are formalizing their follow-up programs. Some of the better known projects are the "Teacher Preparation Evaluation Program" (Adams, 1979) at Western Kentucky University, the "Teacher Evaluation Model" (Ayers, 1979) at the Tennessee Technological University, and programs at West Georgia College, Stanford, the University of Toledo and the Oregon College of Education (Schalock, 1979). In addition, follow-up networks have been established such as the "Teacher Education Program Follow-Up Network" which originates from the Research and Development Centre for Teacher Education at the University of Texas at Austin.

In Canada, "teachers' associations have tended to show more overall initiative in this regard than have teacher-training institutions" (McCutcheon, 1979, p.91). For example, teachers' associations in Alberta (1973 and 1974), Nova Scotia (1975), and British Columbia (1977), have published reports evaluating the preparation of teachers. Faculties of Education have conducted follow-up studies of this nature (for example, Hutcheon, 1972), but few of these studies are longitudinal in design and most are survey-type research. It may be fair to say that confidence in the findings has been minimal and that teacher training institutions have been reluctant to make program changes on the basis of these findings.

Schalock (1979) argues that:

> "research in teacher selection is essentially predictive research, where the predictive concern is one of who is likely to have the most success in achieving desired learning outcomes with particular groups of children under particular learning conditions. Given this view research on teacher selection needs to be longitudinal in design, with prospective teachers being studied throughout their initial preparation programs and through at least their first three and preferably their first five or seven years of teaching."

The University of Lethbridge QAULTEP* project (Dravland and Greene, 1979), was designed to examine relationships within and among five categories of variables as described by Turner (1975): pre-education, selection, training, placement, and work success. Data collected in each phase are used for research in other phases. Data collection on all education students began in 1972. To date, there are from 200 to 500 variables on each of approximately 700 education students in the QAULTEP data bank. Follow-up data on graduates of the program and on others who left without completing degree requirements were incorporated into QAULTEP in 1977 and are now collected regularly.

The purpose of this paper is to present a brief summary of four QAULTEP studies that have been or are being completed within the placement and/or work success categories (Greene and Dravland, 1979; Greene, 1978, 1979, and 1980). The methdology and findings of each study are discussed briefly, followed by a general discussion of problems related to conducting follow-up studies at The University of Lethbridge.

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*QAULTEP is an acronym for Qualitative Analysis of The University of Lethbridge Teacher Education Program.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

"Relationships Between Success in an Education Program and Success in the Teaching Profession" (Greene and Dravland, 1979).

This study examined the success of 50 University of Lethbridge teaching B.Ed. graduates, as assessed by the teachers themselves and by their principals. Each teacher and principal completed a rating scale and questionnaire, and an evaluation form identical to the one used to evaluate that teacher as a student teacher in the education program. In addition, a structured personal interview was conducted with almost all teachers and principals.

Generally, the principals were "very pleased" with the teacher education program and with the graduates of the program. Most teachers who had received an A or B in student teaching received high ratings from the principals on their teaching effectiveness. For those few teachers who had received high ratings in student teaching but very low ratings from their principals, situational or personal factors appeared to be involved. For example, one teacher had marital problems, another had had a "personality conflict" with the school administrator.

Other findings, all of which are discussed in detail in the original report, indicate that factors such as grade and subject placement, extra-curricular assignments, community life, and school size did not appear to be related to teaching success. However, the teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their teaching assignments were positively related to ratings of teaching success. Rural school teachers tended to be rated slightly higher than their urban counterparts. It is possible that this was due to the fact that because most graduates seem to want to teach in urban centres, urban schools are able to select the "best" applicants for their schools.

Also, in-service and professional development opportunities are generally more extensive for urban teachers. Therefore, the new teacher in an urban school was probably being compared to a larger, more "select" and experienced group of teachers than the new teacher in a rural school.

The interviews with teachers and principals proved to be very fruitful in providing feedback on the program itself. Major strengths of the program were seen to be the field experience components and the interpersonal relations with faculty. Areas identified as needing improvement were a need for more "practical" experiences, more breadth in content areas, and more help in classroom management techniques. A major benefit of the interview was the positive response of nearly all participants to the idea of further follow-up studies, including direct observation in the classroom.

A secondary analysis of the data from this study is presently under way in an attempt to develop a psychological profile of effective and ineffective teachers.

"Survey of Graduating Students" (Greene, 1978, 1978, and 1979).

The purpose of this study was to examine the career plans of newly graduated B.Ed. students. Three phases of the study have been completed. Questionnaires were administered to the graduating teachers within one month of their having completed program requirements.

The findings of all three phases were similar. Very few (about 5%) of the graduates had teaching positions secured as soon as they graduated. Of those who did not have a position, 33 to 36% had not even applied for any positions. Some had been offered jobs without applying, but most of those who hadn't applied indicated that a) they preferred to take some time off before working, or b) they "hadn't got around to it yet". The inescapable conclusion is that many of the students were not overly concerned about finding a teaching position.

Many of the graduates (60-70%) indicated that they were limited to a particular geographic region in their acceptance of a position for family or personal reasons, or by preference. A later follow-up of the 66 respondents in the third phase of the study who had no job at the time of answering the questionnaire indicated that 55 (83%) were teaching by Christmas of their graduating year. Information was not available for the other 11 respondents.

Graduates were also asked to indicate their reason for choosing education and for choosing The University of Lethbridge. Reasons such as "teaching appealed to me" and "liking for children" were always ranked first. "Challenge of the program" was consistently a third choice with other reasons such as salary, employment conditions, security, etc., well behind. The University of Lethbridge was chosen mainly for its proximity to home, reputation of the Faculty of Education, and its size.

In January of 1980, the Alberta Department of Advanced Education and Manpower provided teaching information on the 351 graduates who had received a B.Ed. degree between May of 1978 and May of 1979. Of those graduates, 298 (85%) were teaching or in a teaching-related position in Alberta. Five others (1%) were known to be in other occupations or teaching elsewhere; the whereabouts of the remainder were unknown.

"A Comparison of Students Who Enter Education With Those Who Choose Other Occupations" (Greene, 1980).

All students who enter the Faculty of Education at The University of Lethbridge must successfully complete an "Orientation to Teaching" course during their first two years of Arts and Science courses and prior to being admitted to the Faculty of Education. Of these students, approximately 35 to 40% never enter the education faculty either because they do not meet

the requirements or because they choose not to apply. This study compared the students who entered education with those who did not on several measures such as biographical and personality characteristics, university grades, and post-university success.

The group of non-education students may not have been representative of the total university population; consequently, the findings are not generalizable. On the basis of t-tests comparing the mean scores of the two groups on personality tests such as the 16PF, CPI, and others, it appeared that females who entered education had significantly higher grades, and scored considerably higher on characteristics such as submissiveness and guilt-proneness than those who didn't. Males in education seemed to be more conscientious, conforming and socially-conscious than the males who didn't enter the faculty. Education students as a whole were much more likely to complete degree requirements and to obtain a job after leaving university.

A secondary analysis of these data is currently under way and a study now in the beginning stages will compare these characteristics for education students and a large random sample of non-education students.

"The Perceptions and Effectiveness of First-Year Teachers" (Greene, 1980)

A pilot study currently being conducted within the framework of the QAULTEP project utilizes a case-study approach to examine in-depth the first year of teaching. The major purposes of the study are to develop a system for evaluating first-year teachers, and to examine the personal and professional concerns of first year teachers. Ultimately, it is hoped that a system will evolve which can be used on a larger scale by faculties of education and by trained school personnel to evaluate and to assist first-year teachers.

DISCUSSION

This paper was presented as part of a symposium entitled "Can A Small Undergraduate University Make a Signficant Contribution to Research on Teacher Education?". The benefits and problems associated with conducting research in small institutions were discussed in the presentation by Dravland (1980) and apply as well to the follow-up studies. However, some concerns are more critical to follow-up studies than to other areas of research.

Particular Problems

Follow-up studies require large numbers of people to serve as observers and evaluators. Without a graduate program, there is a limited number of persons available and the faculty must rely on obtaining extra funding to free faculty members or to hire and train other personnel, or must rely on very considerable assistance from school personnel. Fortunately this assistance and cooperation has been readily available.

A closely related problem is funding. Follow-up studies tend to be expensive because the subjects are off campus and may indeed be far away. It is very costly to use methods other than survey techniques to follow these people and major funding is not always available. Readily obtainable grants are usually minimal; hence the studies tend to be narrow in focus. Large grants are more frequently provided to large institutions with graduate schools, but there is some indication that this condition is changing.

Particular Benefits

The major advantages in terms of follow-up studies are the cooperation

and input from all faculty members and the close relationship with students and with schools. The effects of this cooperation cannot be over-estimated. Follow-up studies especially depend on the motivation of those who have left the university, to respond or participate. The University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education has been able to maintain a very high response rate to questionnaires, willing participation in interviews, and volunteers for studies involving classroom observation. This relationship has enabled graduates, teachers, and principals to be open and honest with their comments and to know that their opinions are important to the faculty. These benefits are a direction function of the size of the university, and especially of the Faculty of Education.

Other advantages include cooperation from other university departments such as the Registrar's office and the Computing Centre. Because staff and faculty members are known personally, assistance from these departments is readily obtained. A major benefit is the large number of teachers and principals in Southern Alberta who have been trained in the areas of clinical supervision and/or evaluation. A major thrust of the Faculty of Education is an emphasis on analysis of teaching and classroom supervision and many teachers regularly attend workshops and courses on these topics. These people then become very valuable in follow-up studies.

The availability of the large QAULTEP data base has made regular follow-up studies more feasible and replications possible. The faculty's commitment to this phase of teacher preparation has ensured that these studies will continue and will become more valuable in time.

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